

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, February 6, 2008

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Detroit

Foster care falls short on basics

Watchdog group saw 460 state files

February 6, 2008

By JOHN WISELY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The Michigan Department of Human Services failed to follow its own policies and to meet basic standards for care of foster children, according to court-appointed experts who reviewed hundreds of case files.

The report released Tuesday by the Children's Research Center said the state:

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- Failed to run required checks on the homes of relatives where children were placed.
- Missed required visits to children.
- Bounced children from one foster home to another.
- Failed to keep adequate medical records for children.

The findings are in a study of 460 foster care case files; the study was conducted last fall as part of a lawsuit filed by Children's Rights, a national group. U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmonds ordered the study to gauge the effectiveness of a system that handles more than 19,000 children.

"This report confirms problems that have been known to management of the Department of Human Services for some time," said Sara Bartosz, the lead lawyer in case. "Unfortunately, it took a lawsuit to get a report of this depth."

Bartosz said she expects the report to figure prominently in the group's lawsuit against the state. The group hopes to convince the judge to order the state to make changes to the system.

State officials said they don't typically comment on pending lawsuits, but they questioned the methodology of the report. This year's state budget funds 300 additional child-case workers, spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said Tuesday in a statement.

The 2005 death of 7-year-old Ricky Holland in a foster-adoptive home near Williamston prompted changes in how the department monitors foster homes. Free Press reports after his death, and stories following the deaths of 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge and 2-year-old Allison Newman in 2006, found some of the problems noted in the report.

"These new staff will provide additional opportunities to focus on efforts to improve outcomes for children and families and reduce caseloads," Sorbet's statement said. She was unavailable to answer questions Tuesday.

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Report cites serious problems in state's child welfare system

2/5/2008, 4:01 p.m. ET

By **DAVID EGGERT**
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — State caseworkers did not make required face-to-face visits with children in foster care and failed to conduct background checks before placing children with relatives, court-appointed experts said in a report Tuesday.

The analysis of the cases of 460 children in the custody of the Michigan Department of Human Service also found that caseworkers did not adequately plan for children's needs early in their foster care placements.

Policy states that caseworkers make two face-to-face contacts with children during their first month in foster care. But caseworkers did not make any contacts in 31 percent of the 460 cases analyzed by the Children's Research Center.

Experts said about 41 percent of children were moved at least three times during foster care.

The Children's Research Center, a nonprofit based in Madison, Wis., was appointed by U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds to conduct the case record review. Edmunds is overseeing a class-action lawsuit filed in August 2006 by New York-based Children's Rights, a national child advocacy group that alleges 19,000 Michigan children are being harmed in foster care.

Initially, state officials said they wanted to try to settle the suit. But settlement talks broke off last year when the state said it had no money to enact reforms. A trial date has been set for June.

A message seeking comment was left Tuesday with a DHS spokeswoman.

The study involved randomly selected cases from Ingham, Washtenaw, Jackson, Calhoun, Berrien, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Kent, Genesee, Saginaw, St. Clair, Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties — which represent more than 70 percent of Michigan's foster care population.

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Children's Rights: <http://www.childrensrights.org>

Michigan Department of Human Services: <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>

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Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Report cites Mich. foster care failures

Review lists flaws in background checks, home visits; state official points to improvements.

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

Michigan Department of Human Services failed to make background checks of relatives taking in foster children, didn't make regular visits with children and routinely moved children from one home to another, according to an independent report released Tuesday as part of a lawsuit seeking reform of the state's foster care system.

Children in foster homes were also victimized two and a half times more than the reasonable threshold set by the federal government, the report said.

These are a few highlights from a 95-page report that analyzed 460 foster care cases for New York-based Children's Rights, which is scheduled in June for a class action trial against the state on behalf of 19,000 foster children. The report buttresses the organization's argument that Michigan is not providing basic services, stable placements and protection from further abuse, said Sara Bartosz, a senior staff attorney at Children's Rights, which has prevailed in similar lawsuits in numerous states now under court-ordered reforms.

"The most serious message of this report is children are not being protected from harm," Bartosz said. "Fundamental reform needs to occur."

But reform of Michigan's child welfare system has been a priority for five years and numerous initiatives have been launched in an effort to make the system better for children, Department of Human Services spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said in a prepared statement.

She pointed to 300 new children's services positions in the state's 2008 budget -- in spite of a dramatic revenue shortfall. And she said Michigan's rate of maltreatment has been better than the goal set by the federal government for the past six years.

"We remain vigilant in our efforts to provide the best possible protection, services and outcomes for children placed in our care," Sorbet said.

Children's Rights sued the state in August 2006 and was granted class action status in February 2007. The organization attempted settlement talks with the Department of Human Services but they broke down in April 2007 because state officials said resources were needed to settle but they were unavailable with the massive budget crisis.

The report was conducted by a court-appointed expert, Madison, Wis.-based Children's Research Center. It showed:

- The state placed 7,000 children with relatives but failed to check for criminal or child abuse records in 35 percent of cases.
- Many children went without basic medical care: 22 percent did not receive at least one physical exam and 30 percent did get a periodic dental exam.
- Caseworkers on average failed to a required monthly contact with 25 percent of children.
- Children live in an average of three foster homes but some move more than 10 times. At least one child had 40 placements.

The state still has a long way to go to improve the system, said Jack Kresnak, president and CEO of Michigan's Children, a child advocacy organization.

"This report serves as a wake-up call for the entire state that the children of Michigan who are in foster care need more than what they are getting," Kresnak said.

To read the full report, go to www.childrensrights.org.

REPORT SAYS FOSTER CARE SYSTEM NOT COMPLYING WITH STATE, FEDERAL POLICY

A court-ordered study released on Tuesday shows that Michigan's foster care system "fails to comply with legislative requirements and federal policy standards" in many areas, including proper initial placement of the children, resulting in multiple moves for foster children, and exceeding timelines for notifying when a child is eligible for adoption by an average of 58 days.

The [study](#) was done by Children's Research Center, a nonprofit organization in Madison, Wisconsin, and commissioned by Detroit U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmonds in the class action lawsuit *Dwayne B. v. Granholm* in which a national advocacy group is suing the state on claims that its foster care system violates the rights of the 19,000 children in its custody.

The Department of Human Services, the plaintiffs' counsel, Children's Rights, and McDermott, Will & Emery, an international law firm on the case as part of its pro bono program called "Kids First Project" jointly funded the study.

Maureen Sorbet, spokesperson for DHS, said in a written statement that although the department doesn't usually comment on pending litigation "we question the methodology and conclusions assumed in the report.

"Although maltreatment in care is cited in the report, for the past six years, Michigan's rate of maltreatment has consistently been better than the child safety goal established by the federal government," Ms. Sorbet said.

The report, which collected data on 530 cases from 14 counties from September 2007 to December 2007, said that the results document "many areas where the foster care system in Michigan fails to comply with legislative requirements, state policy, federal performance standards, and best practice standards promulgated by national child welfare organizations."

The weaknesses identified by the report, and singled out by Children's Rights in a release sent out Tuesday, included that more than 40 percent of sampled children changed foster care placement at least three times, with one child undergoing more than 40 placements.

The report said that the moves were often linked to behavioral problems, which, it said, indicated deficiencies in initial screenings and placement decisions and also pointed to a need for more services to help foster families deal with adjustment issues.

Caseworkers also failed to make the required visits to children within 30 days after they were placed in foster care in 76 percent of the studied cases, and didn't follow up with children after the first month in more than 30 percent of cases.

Children's Rights also made much of the state's rate of maltreatment or abuse while in care, which was .8 percent in 2006, (or three incidences) technically two and a half times the federal threshold of acceptance.

However, the report cautioned, "a comparison of rates over time when the measured event occurs infrequently must be done with caution, as relatively small fluctuations in annual substantiated episodes of abuse or neglect in foster care can move a state in or out of compliance with the federal threshold."

For example, Michigan reported the following rates of substantiated maltreatment of children in care for the years 2003 through 2006: .40 percent; .32 percent; .12 percent and .20 percent. A mere .2 percent change in the rate of maltreatment represents as much as a 167 percent change viewed in relative terms.

"With rare events such as maltreatment in care, any sampling strategy utilized can seriously overestimate (or underestimate) the rate at which maltreatment occurs in the general foster care population," the report said.

"Furthermore, CRC believes there are serious issues with the way abuse and neglect rates are computed that also make comparisons between years and between jurisdictions problematic. Therefore, extreme caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from differences between the federal threshold (0.32 percent) and maltreatment rate for sample cases (0.80 percent)."

"This report gives us a comprehensive, objective view of a system that has utterly failed to protect the children in its custody," said Sara Bartosz, senior staff attorney for Children's Rights. "We hope that it serves as a wake up call to DHS that it is time to stop trying to paper over its problems and start making real improvements for the children whose constitutional rights it's trampling every day."

Ms. Sorbet said that "fundamental reform" of child welfare has been the department's top priority for the past five years "and we continue to vigorously pursue these efforts."

She referenced the administration's recommendation this year to add 300 new children's service positions, which will help DHS focus on "improving outcomes for families and children."

Ms. Sorbet added that DHS has also stepped up its criminal history and child abuse background checks; engaged community partners to help families stay together and enacted a task force to get recommendations on how to address racial disparity and supporting youths exiting foster care.

In reference to criminal background checks, the Children's Research Center report said that DHS didn't perform the required background and criminal checks in 35 percent of cases where children were placed with relatives. (On the plus side, 38 percent of children were placed in the more desirable situation of living in relatives' homes, nearly 6 percent more than in 2006.) Also a positive: although it wasn't required, caseworkers still performed safety checks in 26 percent of cases before placing children in foster care with their non-licensed relatives.

The areas the study said were of "relative strength" in the foster care system, included needs identification, service referrals, and service participation, saying that "(n)needs are systematically identified and frequently multiple service referrals are made on behalf of both children and families served by DHS."

In all, two hundred eighty-five children (62 percent of the 460 sample children) had mental health needs identified by workers, and nearly 90 percent were referred for services. Over 58 percent received multiple referrals.



THE BAY CITY TIMES

Torture charges added in abuse case

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

By CRYSTAL McMORRIS

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Cassandra and Michael Pasquale exchanged smirks throughout an evidence hearing on child-abuse charges on Tuesday, but their apparent levity faded when a judge authorized charges of torture, which carry a possible life sentence, against each of them.

An aunt of the 7-year-old boy who allegedly suffered burns, hunger, chokings, punches, kicks, cold showers and nights in a dirt cellar at the hands of the Pasquales pumped her fist in the air when Bay County District Judge Scott J. Newcombe ordered them to trial on charges of torture, first-degree and second-degree child abuse.

"I want to see them locked up forever," she said, "so that they can never be around children again."

The torture charge requires intentional cruel acts that caused serious mental or physical damage and were perpetrated by a person against someone held against his will.

Newcombe also raised the Pasquales' bond from \$50,000 to \$200,000 each.

A trial will be scheduled in Bay County Circuit Court.

After the hearing on Tuesday, Assistant Prosecutor J. Dee Brooks called the allegations of abuse, alleged to have occurred between March and September 2007, the most severe he's seen in his 20 years as a prosecutor.

"These were intentional cruel acts that caused extreme harm," he said.

The victim is now under the care and custody of another maternal aunt, and relatives say he is regaining his well-being with professional help and a loving home. The boy, whose alleged abusers kept him out of school to avoid social service intervention, now is in the second grade and says he likes school "a lot." He has gained 13 pounds in less than six months.

The boy's mother died when he was 4 years old. His father, Michael Harsha, 35, is also charged with two counts of abusing the child. Harsha agreed to testify against the Pasquales in exchange for "consideration" from prosecutors and waived his right to an evidence hearing. He has not been charged with torture.

Testifying on Tuesday were Harsha and the alleged victim.

The boy appeared confident and answered questions in a loud, clear voice after taking the stand. A special screen allowed the Pasquales to see their accuser, but protected the child from viewing his alleged tormentors.

The boy, who weighed just 31 pounds when taken to a local emergency room in September for treatment of a second-degree burn, said he now weighs almost 44 pounds.

Under questioning from Brooks, the boy recalled how the Pasquales, along with Cassandra's daughter, came to live with him and his father at their home on Dean Street early last year.

"After we met them online, we went to visit them (in Ludington) and then they came to our house to live," he said.

Brooks asked what "bad or mean things" the Pasquales did to him.

"They punched me and kicked me in the stomach," the boy said. "They hit me in the head with a (plastic) baseball bat."

He said they also forced him down into the dank cellar, which had no furniture or lights on, sometimes overnight.

"It was just dark and dirt," he said.

And while they allowed Cassandra's daughter and Michael Pasquale's son, who visited on weekends, to eat regularly, the child said he was often excluded.

"They didn't let me have meals a lot," he said.

"Were you hungry?" Brooks asked.

"More than hungry," the boy said. "I was starving!"

After the Dean Street home went into foreclosure, the group moved into an apartment on Ninth Street, where, the boy said, the abuse continued.

He said the Pasquales forced him to puff a cigar and his father forced him to drink a bottle of beer.

The boy pulled up his sleeve and revealed a burn scar and described how he got it. One day, he said, Michael Pasquale took a lighter and held it under his right wrist, causing the burn that eventually lead to the trip to the hospital when it failed to heal. The boy was taken to the hospital only after a social worker, alerted to the boy's condition by a tipster, visited the home.

Asked why Michael Pasquale burned him, the child replied that "the only thing that was said was it was because of my own stupidity."

Sitting on the witness stand in jeans and a striped, long-sleeved rugby shirt, the boy also described an incident in which Cassandra punished him.

"They set up two or three cords and wrapped it around my neck," he said. "And whenever I lied - which I don't think I did - they pulled it." The other end of the cord, he said, was looped around a closet rod.

Before the Pasquales moved in with them, the boy said, his father mostly "just spanked and yelled" for discipline. "He didn't starve me when it was just me and him," he said.

But his father - whom he referred to as "Mike" - never intervened, he said, when the Pasquales abused him.

"He's not my dad anymore," the boy said. Harsha has indeed lost his parental rights.

Asked by Cassandra Pasquale's defense attorney, Jeffrey M. Day, whether he loved his dad, the boy said "I don't really feel like I do. I feel like I hate him."

Kenneth M. Malkin, Michael Pasquale's defense attorney, asked the alleged victim if he "likes telling stories sometimes."

"I like books," the boy said. "But not telling stories."

Michael Harsha testified that he was present during much of the abuse, but was powerless to stop it.

"There were a number of occasions where I said I needed to get up and get him something to eat, and I was told (by Cassandra) it could wait," Harsha said. "I didn't have a choice."

He said he witnessed several forced cold showers and knew Cassandra ordered his son into a bathtub full of ice water. He also watched as the child was banished to the basement. He said he signed papers making the Pasquales legal guardians of his son and followed all of Cassandra's orders.

"I did not believe, even as his biological father, that I could go against what was being said," he said.

Although Harsha said he knew the Pasquales were married, he said he also believed that they were brother and sister. He said he and Cassandra had a "romantic and sexual" relationship and were engaged to be married.

The reason he obeyed all her commands, he said, was that he was afraid of "repercussions," such as possible release of embarrassing photos that would "ruin" him.

Harsha admitted to going along with withholding food from his son "at least 10 times."

"There are days," he said, "when I did not attend to that need. But I was not the only one. There were days when Michael and Cassandra offered him nothing to eat."

Harsha said he witnessed the episode with the cord, and said the choking went on for around 15 minutes as he watched his son struggle to breathe.

"I did not feel it was something I could change," Harsha said. "There were several times I said 'We need to change the punishment,' then something new could come up in its place."

Harsha described his son's reaction when Cassandra ordered him into the cold, dark cellar.

"I don't remember him having much of a reaction," Harsha said. "He was scared by the idea of it, but also scared to react."

Harsha acknowledged being more than a bystander to the abuse.

"I will admit there were a few times that I punched my son in the chest," he said. "I hit him with a baseball bat. I hit him in the head, and his eyes swelled afterwards. Whether those two things are related, I do not know."

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Son's abuser gets 90 days

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

THE SAGINAW NEWS

MOUNT PLEASANT -- An Isabella County man accused of abusing his physically and mentally disabled son will spend 90 days in jail.

Visiting Judge Thomas Brookover last week sentenced Michael McCormick to jail time plus 24 months of probation.

The 48-year-old Shepherd man pleaded guilty Jan. 28 to charges of cruelty to children and domestic violence.

Authorities say McCormick also abused his wife and kicked and hit his 15-year-old son, who cannot talk and has the intellectual capacity of a toddler.

Police investigated the abuse after a Thanksgiving Day incident left the teen with two black eyes, bruises and scratches, authorities said. v

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Autistic girl, 14, can stay in school

Judge forbids assisted communication about abuse case in Oakland County

February 6, 2008

By L.L. BRASIER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A judge Tuesday stopped short of removing a severely autistic girl from a Walled Lake high school -- the same school where she reportedly used a controversial communication technique to report that her parents had abused her.

But the judge warned prosecutors and police to stop interrogating the child without her court-appointed guardian present.

Advertisement

Defense attorneys for the parents had sought to have the child, who cannot speak, removed from the school so that she could no longer use facilitated communication, a widely discredited method in which the child types messages with the help of a facilitator who guides her hands. Most major universities and autism experts contend it is the facilitator who is actually communicating.

The father is charged with raping the girl, 14, based on messages she typed at school in November. And the mother faces child abuse and other charges because the child, in her typed claims, said the mother knew of the abuse but did nothing.

The girl, however, failed to answer a single question on the keyboard during two days of hearings last week in district court.

Tuesday, defense attorney Deborah McKelvy, representing the mother in family court, said she was concerned police and prosecutors would try to coach the girl into answering questions on the keyboard, even by rote.

Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Barbara Morrison argued that facilitated communication was the child's only voice.

Circuit Judge Joan Young said the facilitated communication could continue at school, but prohibited the use of it to try to communicate with the girl about the pending case.

Young also appeared alarmed when she learned West Bloomfield police interviewed the girl's 13-year-old brother, who also is mentally impaired, on Dec. 4 without notifying his guardian and without his parents or an attorney present. "That is not to happen again," she said.

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or lbrasier@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080206/NEWS03/802060303>

February 5, 2008

SENATE PANEL SAYS IT NEEDS MORE TIME TO MULL STRICT CHILD ABUSE BILLS

Saying it needs more time to narrow down what acts could be considered criminal, the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday decided not to vote yet on bills that would make it felony child abuse to knowingly commit an act that put a child in unreasonable danger, even if no physical harm results. [SB 158](#) and the sentencing legislation, [SB 760](#), would allow prosecutors to charge people with third degree abuse for acts such as leaving a child in an overheated car for hours.

Currently, said the bills' sponsor [Sen. Ron Jelinek](#) (R-Three Oaks), it's only a crime if the child is physically hurt while the bills would make it a crime to expose children to harm as well.

But many members of the panel worried about the fine line between discipline and abuse or about cases in which one person perceives harm to a child but the parents don't.

For example, said Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt), some people might say that taking a newborn child into a smoky restaurant is exposing them to respiratory diseases, therefore to "harm," and some prosecutors may attempt to make a case with these bills, should they become law.

He added that some families keep guns in their homes and teach their children how to use them. "Would someone say that that's exposing children to harm?"

Chair Sen. Wayne Kuipers (R-Holland) said also that there's a major difference between leaving children in a comfortable car for a couple of minutes to "grab a gallon of milk" and leaving them in an overheated car for hours to go to the salon, as was the case with one woman in Oakland County who was convicted of manslaughter after her children died from being left in the car for four hours in the summertime.

Mr. Kuipers said the fact that whether a person put the child in unreasonable harm would be left to the discretion of the prosecutor and too much discretion worries him.

"Maybe we need a better definition of unreasonable," he said.

On the contrary, said [Sen. Bruce Patterson](#) (R-Canton), he thinks using the words unreasonable and "intentional" are good standards for a "jury of our peers" to decide. "It's a good bill," he said.

Even so Mr. Cropsey requested additional time before voting on the bills to perhaps "narrow the issue down farther" to only include such acts as crimes that the Legislature is intending on including.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Report on sex assault coming soon

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

BY RICK FITZGERALD

The Livingston Community News

The Howell Board of Education voted unanimously this week to direct its law firm to deliver a long-awaited report on a sexual assault that occurred on a Howell school bus last spring no later than at the next regular board meeting. That's Monday night.

Attorneys have been investigating how the school district handled the incident, since it was disclosed in September that Superintendent Chuck Breiner was not aware of the incident, even though it was reported to school district personnel and to police.

According to police, a 7-year-old boy reported that he was sexually assaulted by two other boys - ages 9 and 11 at the time - aboard a Howell school bus last May. The two boys have been charged with first- and second-degree criminal sexual conduct in juvenile court.

School board members took the vote Tuesday during a special board meeting. They said they did not yet know how the report would be made public.

Because of the sensitive nature of the report and because it may include recommendations on personnel issues, board members said they were waiting for direction from attorneys on how public release of the report will be handled.

Rick Fitzgerald can be reached at rfitzgerald@livingstoncommunitynews.com or 810-844-2004.

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Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Man dies after setting himself, wife ablaze

Oralandar Brand-Williams / The Detroit News

MONROE -- A 33-year-old Brownstown Township man is dead and his 31-year-old estranged wife was critically burned after he abducted her, bound her with duct tape, doused their sport utility vehicle with gasoline and set them both on fire Tuesday morning, Monroe County Sheriff's officials said.

A deputy responding to a report that a woman was kidnapped by her husband found the SUV on fire in a wooded area near Rauch Road in Lasalle Township at 11:30 a.m. Family members identified the man as Robert Thompson and woman as Terisa Thompson.

The couple's 14-year-old son was with the couple but was not injured. According to the Sheriff's Office, Thompson told his son to leave the area before he set the SUV ablaze with a lighter, but the boy returned to the vehicle and pulled his mother from the burning vehicle. Robert Thompson died at the scene, police said.

The couple has two other children, an 11-year-old son and a 9-year-old daughter.

Terisa Thompson was listed in critical condition at St. Vincent's Hospital in Toledo.

Thompson works as a waitress at Pizza Hut on West Road in Woodhaven. A manager at the restaurant told The Detroit News she could not comment on Thompson, citing Pizza Hut corporate policy.

You can reach Oralandar Brand-Williams at (313) 222-2027 or bwilliams@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

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Man shoots girlfriend, self

Woman expected to recover; police held at bay for hours

By Christy Strawser
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A barricaded gunman killed himself Tuesday night inside a house in Fraser after shooting his live-in girlfriend and engaging police in a lengthy standoff, according to Fraser police.

The victim, identified by neighbors as Karen Jones, suffered a nonlife-threatening injury, police said. She was transported at about 5 p.m. to an area hospital.

"She's doing fine, actually she lucked out," said Fraser acting Public Safety Director George Rouhib. "He shot at the TV, and he tried to shoot her in the head, but he was so inebriated that he shot her in the shoulder."

Police said the suspect, whose name was not released, was estimated to be in his 60s, had a lengthy criminal record and was highly intoxicated on Tuesday.

The fight with Jones sparked when he missed a scheduled court date Tuesday, police said. Instead, he stayed home and reportedly shaved his head.

Jones ran to a neighbor's house after she was shot and the gunman locked himself inside their house in the 16000 block of Josephine with a .380 caliber handgun.

The Michigan State Police bomb squad and the Macomb County Sheriff's Mobile Command unit responded to the scene with a SWAT team, snipers, and negotiators. Local officers cordoned off a large area around the scene, which was near Fraser City Hall at 14 Mile and Garfield roads.

Police turned off the gas and electricity to the house at about 8 p.m., and rammed the garage door open with a SWAT tank at 8:30 p.m. When the door was knocked down, officers sent portable listening devices and cameras inside.

The SWAT team went in after detecting no sound or movement and found the man dead from a gunshot wound.

"For the most part, he was a nice guy," said neighbor Alice Peabody. "But he had been mentally unstable for years. He was unemployed, and they tried to make ends meet continuously." She said she knew the man as "George."

Peabody said Jones is a very sweet woman, a mother and grandmother who

had lived in the house for years before the man moved in.

Peabody and others in the neighborhood watched the drama unfold in their usually quiet neighborhood. About 20 SWAT team members filled the yard where the shooter was barricaded, using bullhorns and concussive bombs to try to coax the man outside.

"This is like your average 'Leave it to Beaver' neighborhood," Peabody said. "Quiet, calm peaceful. We couldn't believe it. It looked like they were mobilizing for Iwo Jima."

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http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/020608/loc_n3001.shtml



Man arrested for threats

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

Jackson County sheriff's investigators arrested a Jackson man Tuesday after he allegedly called a woman more than 100 times and threatened to kill their toddler.

Thomas Cowper, 28, was in the Jackson County Jail today pending arraignment on charges of aggravated stalking, child endangerment and violating a personal protection order.

The mother of their 11-month-old child said Cowper harassed her all day Tuesday, starting at her job in Columbia Township. The threats eventually were aimed at their child, the woman told investigators.

Cowper was located with help from city and Columbia Township police and was arrested in a city house.

-- Compiled from staff reports

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Article published Feb 6, 2008
Senior health at core of PACE
Elizabeth Huff
The Enquirer

As baby boomers begin to retire, many are wondering how they will continue living at home as long as possible.

A holistic health care organization coming to Battle Creek by the end of the year might have an answer.

Historically, the frail elderly have been placed in nursing homes, which can be costly to taxpayers and demoralizing to people who prefer to live independently.

Yet a Medicare- and Medicaid-funded program that offers mental, physical, social and spiritual services for the elderly under one roof has found a home in Battle Creek. It is a Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), which in Battle Creek will be CentraCare.

The Battle Creek Community Foundation has been incubating the idea for six years, BCCF President and Chief Executive Officer Brenda Hunt said.

On Tuesday, CentraCare's Executive Director Rod Auton signed a 15-year lease to occupy 10,000 square feet of renovated space at Burnham Brook Community Center.

"It's really exciting," Hunt said. "I think we are just starting to find out all the different ways we can connect different services."

CentraCare will provide a full range of services, including transportation to and from Burnham Brook for services including meals, personal hygiene care, dementia services, physical therapy and medication.

Individuals who qualify for Medicare or Medicaid, live in Calhoun County and are age 55 or older might be eligible. PACE clients would include people who are frail enough to qualify to live in a nursing home, but who can live at home with PACE services.

Auton, a 45-year-old Battle Creek native and president of the CentraCare's parent organization, Comprehensive Senior Care Corp., for 12 years ran a PACE program for the Detroit area. The Lakeview High School graduate moved back to Battle Creek in 2007 to head this project.

The PACE idea began in the 1970s when medical professionals in San Francisco saw a need for coordinated care for the frail elderly. They brought together adult day care centers, in-home care services, home-delivered meals and housing assistance programs. The program expanded to become the comprehensive service package PACE in 1990, according to the Alexandria, Va.-based National PACE Association.

Since then, about 51 PACE programs have been established in the nation, Auton said. Battle Creek's program is one of two currently being developed in Michigan. The other is in Muskegon, and two already exist in Detroit and Grand Rapids.

Medicaid likes PACE because it controls costs by charging a flat fee for services, Auton said. Medicare likes PACE because it delays admission to costly nursing homes, and in most cases clients die without having to be institutionalized at all, he said.

CentraCare, which will create 35 to 40 new jobs, is the senior services provider that Burnham Brook officials had

declined to name these past few months.

By leasing space, the organization will bring in \$165,000 in annual revenue to the financially-strapped senior services organization. It will operate five days a week with a maximum of 150 clients with an estimated annual budget of \$9 million to \$10 million at full capacity.

Renovation is scheduled to begin by March, Auton said. He hopes to see it finished by June and to have the program up and running by the end of 2008, pending state approval.

Elderly people who qualify for long-term care services have already had the option to be in a PACE program, said Linda Frost, director of in-home services and Medicaid waiver director for Region III-B. The Medicaid Waiver Program helps disabled individuals of all ages live at home instead of in an institution.

But with CentraCare in Battle Creek, seniors can have that level of care locally.

"It's just going to be wonderful for the community," Frost said. "We're hoping we can collaborate."

Area Agency on Aging Region III-B and Senior Health Partners, which also lease space at Burnham Brook, will move their administration offices upstairs. Most of Burnham Brook's second-floor social activity rooms will remain the same.

"We're ready to start a new page," Hunt said. "We've come a long way to get to this day."

Elizabeth Huff can be reached at 966-0684 or ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com.

The County Press

Food for Families offers free meals

by JENNIFER DECKER
STAFF REPORTER

As part of the Food for Families program, St. Paul's Lutheran Church is offering free hot meals to the public from 4-5:30 p.m. every Monday.

The church is located at 220 North Van Dyke and volunteers are looking for "customers" and want to get the word out about their soup kitchen that started up two weeks ago.

"We served five last week, but we think the word hasn't gotten out," said Linda Looper, Food for Families coordinator. "We hope to get more. Individuals are served regardless of who they are. This is a ministry of our church and we hope to serve Imlay City, Almont and Capac."

On this past Monday evening, the soup kitchen served two people as volunteers manned their stations to serve a meal of breakfast.

Looper said the menu has been rotating. The first week, sloppy Joes were served. The second week was chicken, green beans, potatoes, and dessert. Monday night, volunteers served a breakfast casserole, hash browns, and fruit.

"We've had donations of food," Looper said. "Next week is lasagna, bread, salad, and dessert."

Tanya Dimoski of Capac volunteered at Food For Families Monday. She's no stranger to the restaurant business as her parents own Louie's in Capac. She is a student at Oakland University.

"I was doing a few things at OU and heard about this soup kitchen and I thought I'd come out," Dimonski said. "It's getting the word out. Sometimes it takes a little time."

David Sears, 17, a junior at Imlay City High School, flipped pancakes on the grill. Monday was his off day from being a chef at Lucky's Steakhouse in Imlay City. He decided to spend the time instead volunteering at the church. "I came out to volunteer to get credit for community service at school," he said. "My girlfriend, Natasha Nivision, might come out with me next Monday."

Cle Lobstein is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and washed a fry pan and let it air dry. "This is our third session. We need customers. We have volunteers," Lobstein said.

Another volunteer, Rich Konik, an Imlay City resident and member of St. Paul's said he felt there was a big need in the community to offer the free hot meals.

The church has even had outside volunteers help at the soup kitchen like Michael Vasquez, a member of North Goodland Baptist Church. "I'm unemployed and trying to volunteer in as many churches as I can," Vasquez said. "The reason I do it is God blesses you. It spreads. Be a light to the world."

Vasquez said his church is thinking of adding a similar soup kitchen. The thing I'd say is I was born Catholic, attend a Baptist church, and have been volunteering at a Lutheran church," Vasquez said. "This is a great bunch of people here. When you find Jesus it has nothing to do with religion. It's one cause."

Jennifer Decker can be reached at (810) 664-0811, Ext. 8125 or jennifer.decker@lapeergroup.com

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Chelsea-area food pantry seeks to open location to serve Dexter

Faith in Action needs space for an office, storage

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

BY LISA ALLMENDINGER

News Special Writer

Faith in Action, a Chelsea-area nonprofit, is looking for a location in Dexter for a new food pantry.

The organization already helps between 40 and 50 area families a month, said Nancy Paul, Faith in Action director.

Once a location is found, it would open its doors "a couple half-days a week just for food," she said.

Faith in Action's Chelsea location, besides serving as an emergency food pantry, also accepts clothing and household supplies and provides financial assistance with utility services and rent. The organization serves people in the Chelsea and Dexter school districts.

"What we are planning is a satellite food pantry that will allow us to better serve the Dexter area, to be more available both for customers and donors," Paul said.

Several locations in Dexter are being considered, Paul said.

Faith in Action is looking for an area large enough to house an office and a room for supplies that can be locked up, she said, estimating the space needs to be between 500 and 1,000 square feet.

Courtney Nicholls, Dexter's assistant village manager, said Faith in Action approached the village for help finding a location.

Paul said Faith in Action has found it difficult to keep its pantry stocked during the last two years, but she believes a location in Dexter would bring in more donors.

Paul said the group has had two meetings with members from numerous churches and service clubs.

"This (a second food pantry) has been a long-standing desire of the organization that makes sense at this point because so many individuals, groups and congregations have expressed a desire to help in these difficult economic times," Paul said.

The need for food and other emergency services, such as utilities and eviction prevention, has increased dramatically over the past few years, she said, and "we anticipate more hardship in the near future."

For more information, contact Paul at 734-475-3305 or go to www.faithinaction1.org.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at lallmendinger@sbcglobal.net or at 734-433-1052.

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STURGIS JOURNAL

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Soup dinner raises money for, awareness of hunger

Print Page

By Jef Rietsma
Sturgis Journal

THREE RIVERS - It's one aspect of being a teacher that Jennifer Hackenberg doesn't like - knowing a student has come to school hungry because there's no food at home.

For the past 12 years, Three Rivers Community Schools have overseen a program that reminds residents that hunger isn't something that happens "somewhere else."

Empty Bowls has raised \$48,000 in total since its inception in the district in 1996, providing relief to local families.

Hackenberg, a kindergarten teacher at Norton Elementary School and co-chair of the 2008 Empty

Bowls, said she looks forward to the program topping the \$50,000 mark when the 13th annual event takes place 5-7:30 p.m. Thursday at Three Rivers High School.

All money raised during the event is turned over to the local Emergency Care Food Bank.

"Empty Bowls is symbolic," she said. "It represents the cases in Three Rivers where families don't have the money or resources to enjoy a nutritious meal."

The meal also affords parents the opportunity to explain to their children that there are hungry families in their own community. Hackenberg said it creates awareness as much as it does goodwill.

For the past few weeks, students in the district's first-, third- and fifth-grade classes, as well as their peers at Immaculate Conception School, have spent time in their art classes making bowls. The porcelain bowls are shaped colored, decorated and glazed, and available to take home for every family that attends the Empty Bowls dinner. The meal is offered for a donation only, though organizers suggest a \$5 minimum contribution. Meals, however, are not served in the student-made bowl, Hackenberg said.

The event is an all-district collaboration, as parents, teachers and school staff volunteer their time or donate food necessary for the soup dinner. Any unopened, non-perishable food item is donated to the agency.



Norton Elementary first-graders Dan Foura, Alexandria Deel, Sydney Harrison and Katie Tipton glaze bowls shaped like pumpkins. Students spent time creating the bowls for the "Empty Bowls" benefit soup dinner, which takes place Thursday.

Hackenberg said she especially enjoys the fellowship created as a result of the event.

"It's one of the few events that brings a large population of the Three Rivers community together," she said. "Socially, it's a pretty big event and people seem to support this because they know the benefits it provides."

Hackenberg said she is aware of some Norton students who come from a family that benefits from the services of Emergency Care Network. Despite their tough circumstances at home, she is always touched by the few cans of donated food those children bring to school.

"The family may not have much at home but they always find a way to contribute," she said. "It really touches my heart to see that."

Inspired by the program, Portage Public Schools later this month will have its first-ever Empty Bowls event.

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Potters make bowls to benefit youth in need

By Michael P. McConnell
Daily Tribune Staff Writer

PLEASANT RIDGE -- Wetting her fingers, Priscilla Eggen easily molds a lump of reddish clay into the form of a bowl as she leans over her spinning potter's wheel inside her Ferndale shop.

Eggen owns Clay Etc., 701 Livernois, and is making several bowls for this year's Empty Bowls Soup Dinner to benefit Ferndale Youth Assistance.

For \$10 diners get to eat a variety of soups and breads donated by area residents and restaurants, and keep the handmade bowls. The money raised goes to help the hungry or needy.

A skilled potter who trained at Oakland Community College's Royal Oak campus, Eggen calls on other potters from her alma mater to donate bowls for the annual benefit dinner.

Eggen, of Pleasant Ridge, recalls a parable about how all the people in hell starve because they have long handled spoons strapped to their arms, making it possible to reach into a pot of stew on a table, but impossible to put the stew in their mouths.

"All the people in heaven also had the long spoons, but they were able to eat," Eggen said, "because they learned to feed each other."

Over the past 15 years Eggen has gotten up to 30 potters to donate handmade bowls for the annual Empty Bowls Soup Dinner.

"We usually end up with several hundred bowls," Eggen said. "Potters are so generous and they love it."

Eggen, along with Cindy McLean and Dianna Skiles, also of Pleasant Ridge, put on the Empty Bowls Soup Dinner with other volunteers. This year's event is from 5-8 p.m. Tuesday at the Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road.

It usually raises between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for the need, Skiles said.

In the past the money was split between the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit and Ferndale Youth Assistance, she said.

However, the funds this year will all go to the Ferndale group's emergency needs fund.

Ferndale Youth Assistance helps at-risk children and their families. Emergency needs include everything from getting heat turned on in a home to the purchase of a coat for winter, Skiles said.

"They once bought a uniform for a boy so he could join the Boy Scouts," Skiles said.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$2 for children. Tickets are sold at the door at the community center.

Some of the restaurants taking part in donating soups and bread are Maria's of Ferndale, and Inn Season, Oxford Inn, Tom's Oyster Bar, Lily's Seafood, and Oak City Grill in Royal Oak.

A few hundred people typically turn out for the Empty Bowls Soup Dinner, Skiles said.

"It's a great event and usually takes place on a cold evening," she said. "It's been so heartwarming to see the generosity of all the potters and the volunteers."

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Heating help on hold

By Laura Mead - lmead@dailypress.net

POSTED: February 6, 2008

ESCANABA — Many in the community will be depending on funds raised from Walk for Warmth this year more than any other.

The Community Action Agency, which sponsors the Walk for Warmth fund-raiser, has been forced to suspend heating assistance until after the fund-raising event — the first time this has ever happened, said Cathy Pearson, CAA executive assistant. The annual event raises money to help the needy with heating bills.

Pearson said due to a lack of funds, increased fuel prices, frigid weather and the local economy, there's more people in need and less funds.

Pearson said CAA often gets over 100 people and families who need assistance.

"Last year we spent \$45,000. We could certainly use more than that this year, but we recognize that might not happen" she said.

Pearson said the CAA is very concerned about not being able to assist everyone who needs help paying for heat, especially in such cold weather.

"We're concerned about some of our elderly and low-wage earners, particularly this winter, who are struggling to make ends meet," said Pearson.

Pearson said the CAA does have available funds through The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) for those who have a Detroit Edison (DTE) bill in arrears. Those who do can call the CAA.

Pearson said until after Walk for Warmth, others who need assistance may be able to get help from other organizations who have the available funds.

"We are a much-needed resource for people who might fall through the cracks, but we recognize we are not the sole answer to this problem," said Pearson.

Article Photos



Cathy Pearson, CAA executive assistant

Fact Box

What: Walk for Warmth

When: Saturday, Feb. 23, registration is between 9 and 10 a.m. The walk begins at 10.

Where: Registration and walk start at the Elks Lodge, downtown Escanaba.

Contact: Cathy Pearson, Community Action Agency, 786-7080, 507 1st Ave. N. Escanaba.

Low-income Delta County residents faced with heating emergencies should first contact:

Department of Human Services (DHS), 786-5394.

Otherwise they may get assistance from the Salvation Army, 786-0590.

Also, residents receiving a referral from DHS may be able to get assistance from St. Vincent de Paul, 815 1st Ave. N. Escanaba.



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Brat sale Thursday for Walk for Warmth

POSTED: February 6, 2008

ESCANABA — In preparation for Delta County's Walk for Warmth on Feb. 23, some local businesses are having fund-raisers, with proceeds to go to the Community Action Agency to help low-income residents pay heating bills.

On Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Delcomp, DTE Energy, Edward Jones Investments, PS Locker Plant and Radio Results Network will sponsor a bratwurst sale in front of the Ludington Post Suites, 524 Ludington St.

The businesses will offer a brat, chips, and fortune cookies for a suggested donation of \$3. Larger orders will be accommodated, but those making the orders are being asked to call the CAA office today at 786-7080 with the orders and pick-up time.

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Charity gives hope

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#)

February 06, 2008 10:16AM

Thank you!

There always are reasons not to give time or money. We're busy, we have our own needs and, money is tight for many of us.

Instead, this community still shows its generosity.

The latest example? Warm the Children, which provides winter clothes to children in need, raised \$84,000 last year. That's far more than typical, and that warmed close to 1,000 youngsters.

There's more. Toys for Tots received a late surge in donations after lagging initially. More than 150 people, families and groups (including kids from Parnall Elementary School!) have signed up for columnist Brad Flory's "Lunch Bunch," to donate to food pantries.

Even in lean times, this area's residents continue to give. That generosity provides food, clothes and shelter for many. Let's be grateful for the warmth for bodies — and the warmth in our hearts.

— *Jackson Citizen Patriot*

Sybyl's List generates \$90,000 in donations

by Kristyn Peterson | The Flint Journal

Wednesday February 06, 2008, 11:32 AM

Last year, the holiday season was a little warmer for a mother who hadn't had a coat in 10 years, and it was a little more fun for a young boy who's family couldn't afford boxing equipment.

Both received gifts from Sybyl's List: The mother received a coat and the boy received boxing gloves, a helmet and mouth guards.

Sybyl's List is compiled by the Resource Center in Flint and asks for donations to those in need throughout the holiday season.

In 2007, the list generated more than \$90,000 in cash and donated items for 51 nonprofit agencies. More than 2,900 donors participated.

"It's a way for all of the nonprofits to come together," said Dale Weighill, the president and chief executive officer of the Resource Center. "They kind of market themselves separately throughout the year, but at the holiday time in particular it's important for them to come together and help those in need."

The updated list of needed items was published each week in The Journal in December.

The program, which was previously called the Holiday Wish List, was renamed in 2007 after Sybyl Atwood, who was the Resource Center's director of volunteer services for about 40 years. Atwood died in July after a battle with ovarian cancer.

"The response was down a little bit this year," said organizer Maria Freeman. "This was the first year we did it without Sybyl. That made it a little hard."

About \$9,000 worth of what was generated went to Lutheran Child and Family Services of Michigan, Freeman said. The group received household and personal need items, gift certificates and cash donations.

Through the list, the Youth Projects program at Flint Community Schools was able to help 50 families with the donations they received.

"We are very fortunate and blessed this year in that almost all of the requests we got were taken care of," said Connie Rau, the director of Youth Projects at Flint Community Schools.

The list allows the community to see the needs of others, which leads to more giving, Freeman said.

"One thing this county really comes through on is giving, especially when so many people are in need," Freeman said. "Need knows need, and they really come through for each other."

Michigan Report

February 5, 2008

UNIONS CAN MOVE AHEAD WITH DEDUCTIONS FOR NOW

State employee unions can move ahead negotiating a plan to allow state workers to automatically deduct contributions to the union political action committees under a ruling Tuesday by Ingham Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield. But it appeared likely that higher courts would have the final say in the proposal.

Ms. Manderfield accepted the argument by the Civil Service Commission and unions that the prohibition on using state funds for political purposes was the same as that against using corporate funds for political purposes - and that reimbursing any political expenditures by those entities makes them not campaign contributions.

Opponents of the plan to allow the payroll deductions for PAC contributions, including [Attorney General Mike Cox](#) who filed the case to block it, argued that the costs of deducting the funds constitute use of state funds for political purposes even if the costs are reimbursed.

Ms. Manderfield lifted the temporary restraining order she had issued last week and rejected a request from the attorney general for a preliminary injunction until the case is fully argued.

"If all the cost for implementing the system is reimbursed there is really no transfer of value," she said in finding that the commission was likely to prevail.

And she argued there would be no harm in allowing the process to move forward because the system for creating the deductions was not yet in place. "Implementing that system could take months," she said.

But Ms. Manderfield based at least some of her ruling on the findings of Ingham Circuit Judge Thomas Brown, who had ruled that the Michigan Education Association could create a similar payroll deduction program as long as it reimbursed the school district in advance for the costs of the program. But that ruling, which overturned an order from [Secretary of State Terri Land](#), is before the Court of Appeals.

Mike Hodge, attorney for the commission, hailed the ruling Tuesday. "Her decision was right on point," he said.

Mr. Hodge said the State Personnel Director James Farrell was still determining how to set up the deduction program and what it would cost.

But Eric Doster, attorney for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, an intervening plaintiff in the case, said the ruling opened the state to political solicitations. He argued in court that allowing reimbursement for the time and materials for processing the deductions to avoid a campaign finance violation would be no different than allowing political posters to be hung in the courtroom as long as the campaigns reimbursed the court for the cost of the wall space.

Matt Friendewey, spokesperson for the attorney general, said he would not likely appeal Tuesday's ruling. "We feel our arguments were stronger," Mr. Friendewey said. "We look forward to arguing it on its merits."

Oral arguments in the full case were expected to be scheduled in May.